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Addendum

United Nations Population Fund

Summary

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) has been supporting initiatives and programmes to address the special needs of indigenous peoples, indigenous women in particular, through developing quality, culturally sensitive reproductive health information and education programmes and services that respond to the needs of indigenous peoples and with their full participation. UNFPA has been funding reproductive health-related programmes for indigenous peoples since the early 1990s, and efforts have increased through the provision of biliteracy programmes. More specifically, UNFPA funds national and regional projects responding specifically to the needs of indigenous women, in particular in the Latin American region. A focus on incorporating the gender perspective is at the core of UNFPA reproductive health programmes. These initiatives strive to build local capacity and to ensure that the services and service providers are gender and age responsive and respectful of clients from all social and cultural backgrounds. To mention just a few concrete examples, in Ecuador, UNFPA supports an innovative project that combines traditional indigenous practices with modern medicine. In Bolivia and Peru, indigenous women were empowered through a methodology that provides bilingual literacy enabling women to read and write, simultaneously learning about sexual and reproductive health and rights, and gender quality, with a view to improving their well-being, health and income earning potentials.

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1. Eradicating poverty, achieving universal primary education, empowering women, reducing maternal and child mortality, combating HIV/AIDS, ensuring environmental sustainability and establishing a strong partnership for development are common goals shared by the United Nations Millennium Declaration[1] and the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development[2] held in Cairo in 1994. To make these goals a reality depends largely on their ownership by local communities and on efforts to sustain a "development enabling environment", where local resources are tapped and mobilized to achieve these goals. The Programme of Action calls upon Governments to address, in consultation with indigenous peoples and in collaboration with relevant non-governmental organizations and intergovernmental organizations, the rights and specific needs of indigenous populations, in particular, indigenous women's right to reproductive health.

2. The approved review entitled "Key Actions for the further implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development", the result of a five-year review of the implementation of the outcome of the Conference, reaffirms that Governments should promote and respect the rights of indigenous people with particular regard to their cultures, resources, belief systems, land rights and languages, and should ensure that the human rights of women and girls are respected and promoted through development, implementation and effective enforcement of gender-sensitive policies and programmes.

3. Within the scope of its mandate, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) has been supporting initiatives and programmes targeting the rights and specific needs of indigenous peoples, and in particular indigenous women, to ensure that their rights are fully respected and realized. In effect, indigenous peoples, and particularly indigenous women, often experience lack of access to reproductive health services and information. Several factors intervene to determine their access to these services, among others physical accessibility, affordability, cultural beliefs and discrimination, including gender-based discrimination.

4. In this respect, UNFPA encourages Governments to promote and protect the human rights of the girl child and young women, which include economic, social and cultural rights, as well as freedom from coercion, discrimination and violence, including harmful practices and sexual exploitation.

5. UNFPA has been supporting initiatives and programmes to address the special needs of indigenous peoples, through developing quality, culturally sensitive reproductive health information, and education programmes and services that respond to the needs of indigenous peoples and with their full participation. More specifically, UNFPA funds national and regional projects responding specifically to the needs of indigenous peoples, in particular in Latin America. These projects focus on improving the access of indigenous peoples to primary health-care centres and to improving the quality of the reproductive health care received, as well as support to decentralized planning and decision-making by indigenous leaders on community development needs and strategies. The projects take into account the importance of cultural values for quality of care and include training and counselling components for health workers, as well as the provision of reproductive health equipment and contraceptives.

6. UNFPA has been funding reproductive health-related programmes for indigenous peoples since the early 1990s, and efforts have increased through the

provision of biliteracy programmes. These programmes, which involve providing literacy training in both the native language of the participants and Spanish, the official language of the country, are also excellent vehicles for transmitting information on reproductive health and gender issues to mostly illiterate indigenous peoples, as well as to non-indigenous communities, including community leaders, policy makers, social and health workers and the media. UNFPA has been supporting such programmes in Bolivia, Guatemala, Mexico and Peru. UNFPA has also funded the production of a prize-winning documentary film on the biliteracy programme in Peru, entitled "Así es esta historia".

7. UNFPA efforts have been directed to incorporate the perspectives, needs and rights of indigenous women into the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the population, development and environment programmes that affect them; to ensure that they receive reproductive health services, that are socially, culturally and ecologically appropriate; and to address social and economic factors that act to their disadvantage.

8. To address these challenges, UNFPA has been examining its programming approaches, with the view of refining its knowledge and tools to develop more inclusive culture sensitive programming and mobilizing communities to become active partners in development.

9. A central concern of UNFPA programmes focusing on indigenous peoples has been the incorporation of a gender perspective in order to respond to the very different needs of indigenous women and men and to address such issues as violence against women.

Lessons learned

10. In Bolivia, UNFPA is implementing a project focusing on bilingual literacy among Quechua-speaking women in the departments of Potosi, Cochabamba and Chuquisaca, applying reproductive health and gender concepts. Literacy rates have increased as a result of the project, which started in 1999. To date more than 100,000 persons have been taught to read and write, among them 76 per cent are women. Its innovative approach has won an award from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. Given the success of the project, municipalities are allocating funds for project activities in their yearly operational plans. Activities will also be included in the national educational strategy in order to ensure institutionalization and sustainability during the coming years.

11. UNFPA is also supporting the Government's initiative to elaborate an indigenous identity development programme. UNFPA will provide technical assistance in the development of indicators to ensure that from an intercultural perspective ethnicity is cross-cutting in all sectors, as well as research on gender equality issues. In this regard, UNFPA has funded research to determine cultural sensitive approaches to the provision of reproductive health services.

12. In Peru, apart from funding the film "Así es esta historia" (see para. 6 above), UNFPA, together with the Centre for Amazonian Research and Promotion organized a reproductive health seminar for indigenous women in Pucallpa, as well as support for a number of socio-demographic studies in the Andean region. The seminar produced a follow-up plan addressing integrated health issues and focusing on the

sexual and reproductive health and rights of South American indigenous women. In January 2001, a new sexual and reproductive health programme was launched, focusing on the specific needs of the Huambisa and Aguaruna indigenous communities in the Peruvian Amazon, with special attention given to the spread of HIV/AIDS among these communities. Information, education and communication activities were undertaken to promote HIV/AIDS prevention.

13. In Mexico, UNFPA supported a project that deployed an audience-segmentation approach in order to ensure indigenous people's perspectives were reflected in messages. The Social Security Institute's Solidarity programme produced culturally sensitive materials to reach indigenous rural populations. It emphasized interaction with indigenous communities and families, sensitivity to socio-cultural values and traditions, respect for traditional health practices and communication in the local language via bilingual residents.

14. In Ecuador, UNFPA has been strengthening the local initiatives of indigenous groups. The "casas de la salud" or "Jambi Huasi", in the province of the Sierra and the Amazon, are places that combine ancestral wisdom healing practices with modern medicine. UNFPA has provided support to the municipality of Guamote to integrate sexual and reproductive rights in its municipal agenda and in the concerted action of community organizations in order better to connect reproductive health services to the community. This has contributed to strengthening indigenous women's self-esteem and rights. UNFPA is also strengthening the capacity of indigenous groups to demand quality services. The strategy includes promoters and birth attendants, community agents and women leaders. Topics include: reproductive health services, obstetric emergency services, violence in the family, sexuality and cancer prevention. Moreover, this project has been expanded to include the specific needs of adolescents. Low user fees have been introduced with the aim of achieving self-financing. In coordination with the Commissariat of Woman, action has been taken to address the issue of domestic violence among indigenous communities. Community meetings have been organized to sensitize indigenous peoples on women's rights.

15. **UNFPA emphasizes the importance of cultural values and their linkages with population and development, including democracy and good governance, as well as with human rights in all policies and programmes. UNFPA stresses the need to respect cultural values in the design and implementation of its assistance to activities and in its partnership with key national and international institutions.**

16. **UNFPA makes the following call for action:**

- **There is an urgent need to continue to expand efforts for comprehensive and accessible health services and programmes, including reproductive health, for indigenous communities. These programmes must be carefully developed so that they truly respond to the needs and reflect the rights of indigenous peoples, with particular considerations to their cultures and languages and based on socio-cultural studies.**
- **It is imperative that we place a gender perspective at the centre of all policies and programmes affecting women's health, in particular indigenous women, and involve them in the planning, implementation and monitoring of such policies and programmes, and in the provision of**

health services. And this also implies that the role and responsibilities of men is squarely addressed.

- **It may be particularly helpful to create permanent national and local working groups that include government officials, non-governmental organizations, women's groups and indigenous peoples to ensure that reproductive rights are explicitly covered in policies and laws.**

- **There is also need for more reliable information. Governments, in collaboration with research institutions and non-governmental organizations, as well as with the assistance of the international community, should strengthen national information systems to produce reliable statistics. All information should be disaggregated by population subgroups, including indigenous peoples and by age and sex. This is particularly important for monitoring progress towards goals adopted internationally, at conferences of the 1990s and the Millennium Summit.**

Notes

[1] General Assembly resolution 55/2.

[2] *Report of the International Conference on Population and Development, Cairo, 5-13 September 1994* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.95.XIII.18), chap. I, resolution 1, annex.